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Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance

of America

Schuylkill County Branch

Monday, February 17th, 1941

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EXCERPTS FROM THE CONSTITUTION
of the
LITHUANIAN ROMAN CATHOLIC ALLIANCE
of AMERICA

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1. This organization shall be known as: **"Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America."** With the above title the Alliance shall use a seal embodying a symbol depicting a "Lithuanian Knight" (Vytis).

TITLE

2. Alliance's members shall wear pins upon which will appear the Lithuanian Knight with a small cross and the following initials: L.R.K.S.A.

3. The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America is composed of lodges legally instituted and acknowledged by the Central Executive Body.

PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION

1. a) To unite Lithuanian Roman Catholics with the Lithuanian R. C. Alliance of America; b) to foster loyalty to the United States of America and its institutions; c) uphold morality and the national spirit; d) to promote lectures supporting and encouraging love for the country of the member's origin; e) to tender material aid.

2. a) To promote literacy, the Alliance shall publish literature (newspapers and books); b) shall establish libraries and reading rooms in the lodges; c) shall maintain a Central Library consisting of books in the Lithuanian and other languages, and also newspapers and other general literature; d) shall promote lectures, talks, theatrical presentations, debates, and other similar spectacles wherever and whenever it shall be possible, and especially at the time of the Convention.

3. Shall foster morality by means of advise, presentation of lectures, and shall see that the members fulfill their Roman Catholic religious obligations.

4. Shall support national spirit by arranging celebrations in commemoration of Lithuanian patrons—Fathers of Lithuania; shall herald both by speech and press incidents in Lithuania's History; and by speech and press shall foster patriotism; shall support all useful projects for the betterment of the Lithuanians.

5. Shall insure the health and life of each member; shall pay disabled members benefits, and upon death shall pay to the beneficiaries the amount for which one was insured; shall support and tender aid to the members of the Alliance in need.

ALLIANCE'S MEMBERS

1. All Lithuanians practising the Roman Catholic Faith's requirements and residing within the boundaries of the United States and Canada of both sexes, sound of body and mind, over the age of sixteen and under fifty years, may become members of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America.

MEMBERS' DUTIES

2. The duties of each member are to be practical Catholics; moral and examplary members of the organization; abide by the Constitution of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance of America, also by its By-Laws, and by the Convention's resolutions, guard the Alliance's good name;propogate the Alliance's ideals; urge good membership; help one another whole heartedly and

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honestly; fulfill all positions of committee, if elected or authoritatively appointed.

CERTIFICATE

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

INSURANCE DEPARTMENT

Harrisburg, 21, 1934

I, C. H. GRAFF, Acting Insurance Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby certify that the LITHUANIAN ROMAN CATHOLIC ALLIANCE OF AMERICA located at Wilkes-Barre, is duly organized under the laws of this Commonwealth, has complied with the requirements of the Act of May 20, 1921, and that it is duly registered in this office and authorized to transact business as a Fraternal, Beneficial Society.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Official Seal of this Department to be affixed, the day and year first above written.

C. H. GRAFF,
Acting Insurance Commissioner.

STATEMENT
of the
CATHOLIC PRIESTS SERVING LITHUANIANS
IN THE UNITED STATES
on the
PRESENT SITUATION OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LITHUANIA

Introduction of Catholicism in Lithuania:

The Lithuanians were the last of the European nations to accept Christianity. This occured in the year 1386, the nation's first Apostles very fittingly being its own rulers; Jogaila (who gave to Poland a glorious dynasty of rulers, and one of whose grandsons has been crowned with the aureole of sainthood: St. Casimir), and Vytautas the Great.

Once gathered into the fold of the Catholic Church, the Lithuanians held steadfast to the faith, weathering all storms. At first there were lacking, priests who could preach and instruct in Lithuanian, but even this difficulty was overcome. The See of Vilna was erected, and to provide for the maintenance of Bishop, clergy and the upkeep of churches, the State assigned land. In the beginning of the fifteenth century a second See of Samogitia was established, the first Bishop of which was the Lithuanian priest Matthew.

Beginnings of Education:

With the introduction of Christianity, Lithuania also experienced a rebirth of the education of the masses. Simultaneously with the erection of the Bishopric of Vilna, the first Lithuanian school was set up, which later, in the latter sixteenth century grew into the renowned Vilna Academy, the seminary of many famous missionaries. Along with churches, monasteries, there sprang up schools which furnished and trained priests while spreading among the mass of the laity the rudiments of reading and writing.

Lithuania Rebuffs The Onslaught of the East:

When Lithuania entered the Catholic Church, she became one of the farthermost outposts of Catholic culture, hemmed in, as she was, by the

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hordes on the East, and even to the North.

Lithuania performed a signal service to the Church, as well as to Europe at large, when, under Vytautas the Great, in 1399 it withstood the onrush and invasion of the Tartars into Europe which, had it succeeded, would have seriously arrested Western civilization. This defense of the outpost of Europe was blessed by Pope Boniface IX who declared it a holy war and the defense of the Catholic people. At this period of the world's history, Lithuania stood as an impassable barrier holding back any threatened invasions by the Tartars or other Asiatics into Europe through her doors. This historical event has appropriately been evaluated by true historians, and in recent times (1930), we read in the journal "Jus Ponificum" that for this deed alone the Lithuanian nation, and its leader Vytautas has earned the undying gratitude of all ages.

For several centuries prior to 1794, Lithuania had been one of the great powers of Europe, but that year saw her doomed to the ignominy of Russian occupation of her territory. This fate also befell Poland, Lithuania's political partner.

Struggle With Russia:

Lithuania was occupied by Russia from 1795 to 1914, and regarded as one of its provinces. This is one of the saddest and darkest periods in Lithuanian history. Generations after generations of Lithuanians knew the bitterness of Russian persecution, which spared no class of society, no calling; priests and religious were persecuted, the humblest peasant was persecuted. In 1864 the Russian government closed all Catholic parish schools in Lithuania, of which there were 150 alone in the Diocese of Samogitia. In their fanatic determination to Russianize all inhabitants of Lithuania, the government outlawed all books printed in other than Russian characters which of course were foreign to the Lithuanian people. Russian police and soldiers, disregarding the inviolability of the home, ransaked homes for the "forbidden" literature, and even at church spied on worshippers lest they be found praying or singing from prayer or hymn books printed in other than Russian characters.

World War:

The onset of the World War again brought havoc to Lithuania, as its land became one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Russian-German encounter. Lithuania again found itself occupied by a foreign power, this time, the Germans, who proceeded to strip it of everything they could use. However, Providence had decreed that Lithuania should emerge independent, and on February 16, 1918, at Vilna, the ancient captial, the Lithuanian State Council met and declared to the world that Lithuania was by right free and independent of the twenty members of this Council, four were priests, of whom one is now the Bishop of Telsiai, the Most Reverend J. Staugaitis, another the Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Kaunas, the Right Reverend K. Saulys.

Independent Lithuania:

Lithuania, being predominantly Catholic, from the first days of recovery of its independence, granted the Catholic Church an important part in its life. It was mainly Catholics who played the leading roles in the setting up of a State. Because Lithuania knew what it was to struggle to preserve both its faith and its nationality, it was well organized into various groups which were ready to step into the work of developing a state dedicated to

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Catholic principles. Prominent among these organizations were those of the youth of the land, especially students pursuing higher education, named the "Pavasarininkai" (literally, "Spring-Timers") and the "Ateitininkai" ("Futurists"), respectively.

Disaster Visits Lithuania:

A calamity befell Lithuania on June 15, 1940, when its territory was occupied by Soviet Russia's troops. History repeating itself, it is the Catholics who now suffer again from this new invasion of their land. Of the total population of 3,400,000, it is estimated that 87% are Catholics.

Occupied But Not Annexed By Russia:

Lithuania herself does not recognize any lawfulness in Russia's occupation of her territory, and in this she is joined by that portion of the entire world which has not yet forsaken the principles of truth and justice. The history of the events which led to the brutal and inhuman occupation of Lithuania has been rehearsed in the public press. It consists of a series of guileful incidents masking the treacherous intentions of a powerful neighbor to engulf and annihilate a peaceful, smaller sister-nation.

Unable to endure the spectacle of misery to which their fatherland had been reduced, a number of Lithuanian intellectuals,—a small minority—fled to havens of safety. Among refugees in Germany there are several prominent Catholic lay leaders, several Professors, priests, journalists, lawyers, physicians. There are also both religious men and women, whose situation is very precarious. These refugees are in a pitiable state, being without funds or visible means of support. Several have already been marked by the Nazi authorities as "undesirable" and been given a time limit within which they must depart from Germany. Others have attempted, without success, to cross over to Italy. Lack of funds precludes travel to the other countries, while admission to the United States is doubly hampered by the difficulty of securing necessary consular visas.

Annihilation stalks in the face of Lithuania unless aid comes to her! Russia is girded for a total war of extermination. To the world, Russia proclaims freedom of conscience, of the practice of religion, but past history teaches what confidence can be placed in these assurances.

As if making amends for it having been the last of the European nations to embrace the faith, Lithuania is now resolved to resist, unto the shedding of blood, any attempt to wrench that faith away from it. A nation which under God was the means of stopping the invading horde in the fourteenth century from over-running Europe, which did not succumb to Protestantism and the flatteries of Orthodox Pro-Slavism, will know whence to gather strength for the present struggle. A nation which arose from the ruins left in its land by invading armies of the World War and during the brief span of twenty and two years built up a country of peace-loving, cultured and enlightened citizens, will not easily forsake all that such sacrifice and efforts have amassed. This nation which had to see one third of its sons and daughters migrate to other shores to find that liberty denied to them at home; this nation, blessed with a language the most ancient among the tongues of men, is not yet ready to admit that this is the death agony and the approach of her dissolution. The world—that world still clinging to ancient and eternal verities of truth and justice,—led by the common father of all mankind, the Holy Father from the Vatican, has uttered his word that the cause of Lith-

uania is the cause of right, is the cause of God. In our own land, President Roosevelt has offered us a comforting word also, assuring us that honest men still condemn trickery and guile.

APPENDIX

Population of Lithuania is 3,400,000 — 87% Catholic.

Lithuania has: 2 archdioceses, 4 dioceses, 890 parishes, 940 churches, and had: 4 diocesan seminaries, many Catholic colleges and schools, many religious houses of men and women.

Ordinaries: 3 archbishops, 4 bishops, 3 auxiliary bishops, and had 1 Ordinary for the army and navy chaplains, 1 retired archbishop, 1,970 priests.

Salaries of all the ordinaries, auxiliaries, all priests, attached to the parishes and chaplains of the army, navy, charitable and penal institutions were paid by the Lithuanian government. Under the present communistic regime all chaplaincies and payments of salaries for the ordinaries and priests are abrogated. All church land, chief source of maintenance of pastors, religious priests and sisters was confiscated.

Organizations. All Catholic organizations of men, women, youth and children in Lithuania whose total membership exceeded 800,00 have been suppressed and their properties confiscated.

CATHOLIC PRESS

Lithuania had:

3 Catholic dailies with a total circulation of over 90,000.
17 Catholic weeklies with a total circulation of over 180M.
7 Cath. monthly journals with a total circulation of over 200M.
5 Catholic publishing houses.

Lithuanians in the United States. The population of Lithuanian descent in the United States is about 1,000,000. We have in the United States 115 parishes and about 300 priests. In this number, priests of various orders are included. We have one seminary, one college and High School for boys conducted by the Marian Fathers; three religious orders for women founded in the United States, namely: (a) Sisters of St. Casimir; they conduct two hospitals and two academies for girls and a number of parish schools. They had also a province in Lithuania. (b) Sisters of St. Francis; they conduct one academy for girls, a number of parochial schools, and have a province in Brazil. (c) Sisters of Jesus Crucified; they conduct an orphanage and home for the aged. We have also Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, being a newly established province from Lithuania.

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